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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION TO DISCHARGE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the motion to discharge the Gordon nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Julia Ruth Gordon, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on COVID, yesterday afternoon I announced that Senator ROMNEY and I had reached an agreement for a \$10 billion COVID supplemental appropriations package. It took many rounds of bipartisan talks, many days and nights and weekends of negotiations, but we have shaken hands on a compromise that the Senate can and should move forward very soon.

I thank the Senators on both sides of the aisle who participated in this, and Senators BURR, BLUNT, and GRAHAM were involved with Senator ROMNEY. Senator COONS gets a special shout-out because of his fierce determination to work on international, on getting an international thing done. Senator MURRAY, as well, was very helpful in our negotiations.

The deal we announced yesterday has the support of Speaker PELOSI and President Biden, who urged Congress to work quickly to get a bill to his desk. We are going to work hard to get that done, and I hope my Republican colleagues will join us to move forward on this legislation.

There is no reason why we shouldn't be able to get this funding passed. The administration needs it right now, and we all know that our country is in great need of replenishing our COVID health response funding. Putting in the work, today, to keep our Nation prepared against new variants will make it less likely that we get caught off guard by a new variant down the line.

So this is really essential to America's well-being. It is essential to getting back to normal. All those who decried that we didn't get to normal quickly enough should be supportive of this legislation, because the longer we wait, the more difficult it will be when the next variant hits.

This \$10 billion COVID package will give the Federal Government and our citizens the tools we need—we depend on—to continue our economic recovery, to keep our schools open, to keep American families safe. The package we agreed to will provide billions more for vaccines, more testing capacity, and—essential—\$5 billion for more life-saving therapeutics, arguably the greatest need right now for the country.

These therapeutics are great drugs, but if we don't have them at the ready when the new variant hits, it will let the variant get its tentacles deeper into our society. But this money will go a long way at keeping our schools, our businesses, our churches, our communities running as normally as possible, should a future variant rear its nasty head.

Approving this package is simply the sensible, responsible, and necessary thing to do. Republicans and Democrats alike should now work together

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, listen to our words and hear our sighs. You are our rock of safety. We continue to trust You to protect our Nation and world.

Lord, continue to be our refuge and strength, always ready to hear and answer our prayers. Surround our lawmakers with the blessings of Your grace and mercy. Lead them like a shepherd in their efforts to do Your will on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven. Enable them to permit justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

And, Lord, save the Ukrainian people.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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to make sure we can move this package through the Chamber.

Now, while this funding is absolutely necessary, it is far from perfect. I am deeply disappointed that some of our Republican friends could not agree to include \$5 billion for global response efforts. I pushed them hard to include this international funding, as, of course, did Senator COONS and Senators GRAHAM and ROMNEY because fighting COVID abroad is intrinsically connected to keeping Americans healthy at home.

It is not just the right thing to do to help struggling nations, though we certainly have an obligation to help. It is also good for our country. So it is putting money overseas to prevent COVID from spreading here, because, remember, every variant—all three variants—that hit us started overseas and then came here. So that is not only humanitarian and the moral and right thing to do, but it is in our own self-interest. I know it sometimes sounds anomalous—sending money overseas is in our interest—but with COVID, where it germinates and starts the new variants, inevitably overseas, and then comes to hurt us is the right thing to do in our own self-interest, even if you had no humanitarian interest in doing it, which, of course, many of us do have a great deal of humanitarian interest.

If we don't help the developing nations of the world with vaccines and treatment, we leave ourselves seriously at risk for potential new variants. Omicron, after all, started, in all likelihood, in South Africa, where today less than a third of the population is vaccinated—fully vaccinated.

It is thus my intention for the Senate to consider a bipartisan international appropriations package that will include funding to address COVID-19, as well as other urgent priorities, like aid for Ukraine and funding for global food insecurity.

I know that many on both sides—I mentioned the names earlier—are serious about reaching an agreement on this issue. Nevertheless, this week's agreement is carefully negotiated. We bent over backward when our Republican colleagues did not want to accept certain kinds of pay-fors which we thought were appropriate and have always been used, but we thought it was so important to get this done that we did that. It is a very important step to keeping the country healthy and keeping life as close to normal in the future as we can.

I want to thank, again, Senator ROMNEY for leading the negotiations for the Senate Republicans and working in good faith to reach agreement. I also want to thank, as I mentioned, COONS, MURRAY, BURR, BLUNT, and GRAHAM for their help and support to reach this bipartisan agreement, and Chairman LEAHY and his staff for their assistance in putting the legislation together.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office. They worked around the clock with us to score this legislation.

So we have taken a massive step closer to getting this important funding done, and I thank everyone for their good work to reach this point.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Now, on another happy note, the Judge Jackson confirmation, last night we took our first steps here on the Senate floor toward confirming the historic nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court. By virtue of a motion to discharge, Judge Jackson's nomination was reported out of the Judiciary Committee—it really wasn't reported out of Judiciary.

By virtue of a motion to discharge, Judge Jackson's nomination was put on the floor by a bipartisan vote of 53–47. She now comes to the floor for consideration by the whole Chamber. Every day we move closer to Judge Jackson's confirmation, the case and likelihood of her confirmation grows stronger and stronger and stronger. And I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have approached this process with good faith. At the end of the day, it will be our courts and the American people who rely on our courts who will benefit most from having an amazing jurist like Judge Jackson elevated to the pinnacle of the Federal judiciary.

Here is what happens next. Later today, I am going to take the next step for moving forward with Judge Jackson's nomination by filing cloture on her. My colleagues should be advised that we may have to take some procedural votes to do so, but this will not affect the ultimate result of this confirmation process.

Once I file cloture, the stage will be set for the Senate to close debate on Judge Jackson's nomination by Thursday morning. A vote on final confirmation will then follow. The Senate could then vote to confirm Judge Jackson as Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson as soon as Thursday—as soon as this Thursday. I hope we can work together and make that happen.

What better way to wrap up this work period—this productive, largely bipartisan work period—than by confirming this most worthy, most qualified, most historic nominee to the Supreme Court?

Yesterday, I said something that I think is worth emphasizing all week long: Judge Jackson's nomination is a joyous and momentous occasion for the Senate. She is truly one of the most qualified and accomplished individuals ever considered by this Chamber to the Supreme Court. She will bring a new and much needed perspective to the Court's work, while also affirming the rule of law and respect for precedent.

As I said yesterday, the confirmation of the Nation's first Black woman to the highest Court in the land will resonate for the rest of our Nation's history. Untold millions of kids will open textbooks and see pictures of Justice Jackson and understand in a new way what it means to move toward a more

perfect Union. It means that all our Nation's struggles, for all the steps forward and steps backward, the long march of our democracy is toward greater opportunity and representation for all.

So when the Senate finishes its work this week, Justice Jackson will be the first of many—the first of many. Her brilliance, her lifetime of hard work, her remarkable story will light a flame of inspiration for the next generation to hopefully chart their own path for serving our democracy and unleash so much talent that has thus far not been utilized. This gives me great hope. That should give all of us great hope.

COMMERCE HEARING

Mr. President, finally, I want to close by thanking my friend and colleague Chairwoman CANTWELL for holding a hearing in the Commerce Committee that is of great importance to the American people: ensuring transparency in petroleum markets. That hearing will occur today.

The American people right now find themselves on the losing side of a truly disturbing trend. On the one hand, the American people are paying more and more at the pump, and some of the Nation's biggest oil companies are reporting soaring profits but then using those profits to reward shareholders with stock buybacks.

This is infuriating. Prices go way up; oil companies make more profit; and what do they use it for? Stock buybacks, which do nothing to improve the economy, improve workers, or help the consumer. It is outrageous, and it is one of the reasons there is such mistrust of the big oil companies.

So I am glad that the Commerce Committee is looking into this important issue, and I urge the FTC to likewise take note.

I thank Chair CANTWELL for her work. I expect that we will see additional announcements on this matter very soon. This caucus—this Democratic caucus—is going to keep its eye out and do whatever we can to help with bringing down the outrageously high price of oil and the outrageous actions of corporate executives in the oil industry.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people are seriously worried about the direction our economy is headed. Just between January and March, the share of people reporting high living costs as the most important